(a) whether the manufacturing, distribution and sale of tobacco, Gutka and Pan Masala has been banned in several States in the country;

(b) whether Government also propose to enact any similar law to ban the above said items;

(c) whether public opinion was sought in this regard through a notification date the 29th December, 2002; and

(d) the main point of the public opinion so received and the action being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) The Food (Health) Authorities of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Goa have prohibited the sale of Pan Masala containing tobacco/chewing tobacco/Gutka in their States under the provisions of PFA Act, 1954.

(b) No such proposal at present is proposed to be moved by the Central Government.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. The Ministry has not issued notification dated 29th December, 2002. However, a draft notification issued vide GSR No. 731 (E) dated 29th October, 2002 for inviting comments relates to amendment to the standards of Pan Masala without tobacco. The main point of the comments received are: (i) it is apprehended that proposed rules would prohibit the sale and production of Gutka. (ii) the labeling of Pan Masala containing arecanut and catechu "is injurious to health" should be dropped. The comments received are being examined.

Infant and Mothers Mortality Rate

552. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the increasing infant and mothers mortality rate in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of steps taken to reduce the infants and mothers mortality rate?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA) (a) to (c) As per the Sample Registration System of Registrar General of India, the Infant Mortality Rate, which was 72 during 1998, 70 during 1999 has declined to 68 in 2000.The Maternal Mortality Ratio of India was 408 in 1997 and 407 in 1998 per 100000 live births.

Under the Reproductive and Child Health Programme, interventions for improving child mortality and morbidity are being implemented in all districts of the country. Interventions for children include Immunization against six vaccine preventable diseases; control of deaths due to Diarrohea; control of Acute Respiratory Infections; Prohylaxis against Vitamin A deficiency and Iron deficiency anaemia; Essential new Newborn Care; Promotion of exclusive Breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding practices.

For mothers the interventions include essential obstetric care; emergency obstetric care; provision of referral transport through Panchayats and provision of drugs and equipment at first referral units; provision of contractual staff like additional Auxiliary Nurse Midwives, staff nurses, doctors and anesthetists. Funds are also being provided for schemes to improve outreach of services like 24 hours delivery services at selected primary health centres and community health centres; training of Dais in 166 districts; holding of Reproductive and Child health camps in 178 districts and RCH Outreach Scheme in 151 districts with adverse health indicators.

Bed-People Ratio in Hospitals

553. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the present bed-people ratio in hospitals in the country;

(b) the target set to improve this ratio; and

(c) in what manner Government propose to achieve it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA) (a) to (c) As per available information, a statement depicting State/UT-wise total allopathic hospitals and beds and ratio to population as on 1.1.99 is enclosed. (See below)

Health being a State subject, it is for the respective state governments to provide/upgrade the medical facilities as per their need and priorities.